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INFO RUCNRAQ/IRAQ COLLECTIVE
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RUEHAK/USDAO ANKARA TU

C O N F I D E N T I A L ANKARA 002008

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DEPARTMENT FOR EUR/SE

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SUBJECT: TURKEY/IRAQ: NSC, SADR, AIRCRAFT

Classified by DCM Nancy McEldowney; reasons 1.4 b and d.

¶1. (C) Turkish MFA Iraq Coordinator Celikkol told the DCM April 10 that the GOT would like the USG to persuade the Government of Iraq (GOI) to increase the seats on the Iraqi National Security Council (NSC) from 19 to 21, to allow for the addition of representatives of the Turkmen and Assyrian communities. He said Iraqi Assyrians had expressed to the GOT their concern at not being represented on the NSC, a concern shared by the Turkmen. He said the Kurds are currently the only ethnic minority represented on the NSC, which includes both Shia and Sunni Muslims. It would be appropriate for the Turkmen and Assyrians, both significant minorities, to be represented as well. Celikkol said he does not believe the Shia or Sunni would object to the addition of two seats for these groups; the Kurds will likely object because "they object to everything." The DCM replied that NSC deliberations are already quite advanced, and it will be difficult to make changes at this point. She said she would convey the GOT request.

¶2. (C) The DCM took the opportunity to reiterate U.S. views that Shia cleric Moqtada al-Sadr is a negative factor, undermining peace and stability in Iraq. He has been fueling sectarian conflict, and cannot be persuaded to play a moderating role. The GOT should avoid doing anything that could legitimize Sadr's role in Iraq. A visit to a NATO member state would only bolster his negative influence. Celikkol said Sadr was unknown to the GOT before the war in Iraq. He said the GOT does not share his views. The GOT has no direct contact with Sadr, and its indirect contact has been aimed at moderating him and drawing him away from Iranian influence. He said the GOT had previously invited Sadr to Turkey, but no date has been set, the visit has been put on indefinite delay, and the GOT will not take any steps to pursue the invitation. There will be no surprises.

¶3. (C) The DCM asked Celikkol whether Turkey would be open to considering a request to provide a C-130E aircraft with air and ground crews for the UN Assistance Mission for Iraq. Celikkol expressed concern about Iraqi attitudes toward a Turkish military contribution, and would want that issue resolved before making a formal decision.

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